Moses: Following God into The Unknown – Part 3

# (Exodus 4:24 – 5.2)

This morning we’re celebrating Father’s Day and we’ve been in a series entitled “Following God into the Unknown” looking at the life of Moses. I believe this message today has the potential to significantly impact your life, not only challenging those of you who are fathers, but also encouraging men and women, boys and girls to remain faithful, standing firm in times of transition. This is so important because so much of life is fluid, it’s dynamic, it’s changing, but no matter what’s going on around us, no matter what’s happening in our lives, we want to stand firm because we can’t allow who we are as followers of Christ to be disrupted.

From the moment we meet Moses he was in transition. He transitions from the safety of his mother’s womb into a hostile environment where he was hidden. And then at the age of three months he was placed in a basket in the Nile River, floating among the snakes and crocodiles, but God’s hand was with him. A short time later he was drawn out of the river by the Pharaoh’s daughter and taken into her house. And so, Moses’ life began with a series of transitions, one transition after another.

This is where we find Moses today, he’s in transition again, he’d been 40 years in the wilderness when suddenly he’s called, he’s drawn out by God. Moses had been 40 years in the desert during the same thing day in and day out, week by week, month by month, year by year, when suddenly what had been so predictable was filled with uncertainty. We’ve been talking about Following God into the Unknown and once again Moses is in transition.

I believe this is something that we can all relate to, because we’ve all been there at one time or another. There are times when things are changing, when you have big decisions to make, and you have to follow God with a degree of uncertainty because you can’t see what he is doing and you don’t know what he has in mind. And so, you may be praying for understanding, looking for God’s will in a situation, searching for purpose and you’re just uncertain. You don’t see where you’re supposed to go, what you’re supposed to do, but you’re following God into the unknown.

Some of you today, there’s just so much that you don’t understand, you might say that you’re in a season of transition, but that’s where our faith becomes so meaningful. The Bible tells us that,

*“We live by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).*

And so, it is to be expected that as you’re following God that there would be a certain level of uncertainty, ambiguity, even mystery. But it’s as we walk with God, living by faith, that life begins to unfold before us. And so, as you begin to step out in faith, there is progressive revelation as the way becomes more and more clear to you.

In fact, we sing a song that we go from glory to glory, that’s referring to transitioning; and so we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. But right now, in this moment, everything is unstable, we’re in flux, we’re in transition, having had just a glimpse of glory, and yet recognizing that there’s so much more. That’s what the Bible tells us, Paul says,

*“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).*

And so, if you find yourself in a place like Moses, where you’re going through something and you don’t see everything clearly, this message is for you.

You see, God doesn’t always give us all the details, and that’s a good thing because he’s protecting us, he knows that we couldn’t handle it. And so, what he does is he gives us just enough, he gives us our daily bread, not next weeks or next months, but he “gives us today our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). And yet, today you’re kind of in between, trying to make that decision, or maybe you’re in transition between jobs or responsibilities, and God has given you just enough to know that he’s trying to take you deeper, trying to take you up another level, or trying to get you to trust him like never before. But whatever it is, it’s important for you to understand that when you’re in that place of transition, when you’re in that place of uncertainty, when you’re following God into the unknown, in order to get to the next level there is a birthing process. In other words, as you’re transitioning, it’s likely to become very uncomfortable, painful, and intense.

Now, I know when I started talking about birth that some of you immediately began thinking about being mothers, but it’s Father’s Day and so I didn’t come to talk to you as mothers, I came to talk to you as babies. I want to talk to those of you who’ve outgrown the boundaries, limits or restrictions of the place where you’ve been and where you’ve found safety and nourishment. Today we’re transitioning, and like babies moving from the warmth of the womb into a cold and unknown world, we’re going to resist, we’re going to cry and scream, much like Moses who for 40 years had been on the backside of the desert when God interrupted the tranquil aimless wanderings of a shepherd in the wilderness.

God called to him from the burning bush, drawing him out of his daily existence, drawing him out of his self-pacifying routine of moving the flock of his father-in-law from one place to another, from one side of Midian to the other. “Moses! Moses!” God said from flames of fire blazing within a bush that didn’t burn up. It was there in the harsh and barren wilderness that God counseled Moses, speaking to him, and telling him,

*“Go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:10).*

Moses resisted, he had trouble believing that God could use somebody as flawed and insignificant as he was; but God spoke to him like a psychiatrist, he reasoned with him there in the wilderness like a lawyer in a courtroom. Moses kept describing his problems and God kept declaring his promises. They continued this dialogue in the wilderness until God convinced Moses to stop listening to every dysfunctional thought that came into his mind. God kept speaking promise, purpose, and hope to Moses until he began to change, morphing, transforming into who God created him to be.

God was birthing something in Moses, he was squeezing him out of a place where he’d been kept safe, fed, and nourished for 40 years. Moses had been kept captive by his doubts and fears, but like a baby outgrowing the womb, he began stretching and kicking, and as God was speaking to him Moses was getting the Word of God inside of him and he began to be uncomfortable in that place where he’d been so long.

*God said, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead” and the Bible says in verse 20,*

*“Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt” (Exodus 4:20).*

Moses was transitioning, he’s pushed out, he’s coming out of confinement, moving out of that environment, leaving those boundaries where he had felt safe and protected for so long. God said to “Go” and Moses was moving, he was going from faith to faith and glory to glory. He’s coming into another environment, he hadn’t recognized it yet, but he’d outgrown that place. He had been content, even complacent, but God was opening the door, he was pushing, every restriction, every limitation, every obstacle was about to move, but it wasn’t going to be without some pain. The Bible tells us in Exodus chapter 4, verse 24,

*“At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met [Moses] and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched [Moses'] feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. So the Lord let him alone…” (Exodus 4:24-26).*

As we read this passage of Scripture, it’s like what in the world just happened, did we miss something? You know, God had spoken to Moses, he’d encouraged him, he’d given him miraculous signs, he’d told him not to be afraid because his enemies were dead, and yet suddenly we find that something is seriously wrong.

What we discover is that there’s a lot between the lines that is undisclosed. This is a summary, it’s the abridged version, the Reader’s Digest version, and so apparently Moses who had been called to lead God’s covenant people out of captivity had neglected to bring his own son into the covenant. Genesis chapter 17 describes this covenant with God saying:

*“This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised…” (Genesis 17:10-12).*

And so, Moses had neglected to circumcise his second son, Eliezer, and it appears from the text, that Moses and his wife Zipporah must have had a disagreement about his Jewish faith. We don’t know, but maybe she’d been appalled by the ceremony of circumcision, maybe Moses had passively let her have her way with their second born, but whatever the reason was it certainly displeased the Lord.

God had to go to drastic measures to discipline him, because Moses couldn’t lead the people of Israel if he was disobedient and wasn’t leading his own family in one of the most basic fundamental commands. You know, it would be like wanting to be a Christian, but refusing to be baptized. And so, we’re not told exactly how, but God had to discipline Moses, he corrected him, reminding him of his responsibility to be the spiritual leader of his own house. The Bible says,

*“He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)” (1 Timothy 3:4-5).*

This situation reminds me that there are certain things you can tell your children as they get older that you can’t tell them when they are younger. And so, maybe God didn’t bring this up earlier because Moses wasn’t ready to receive it, but now as their relationship was growing and Moses was maturing, suddenly we find ourselves thrust into this uncomfortable text. We’re out of our comfort zone and finding Moses in conflict with both his wife and God is just a messy, bloody, painful situation.

But Moses is transitioning, God is birthing something in him, there is blood and there is pain. It’s like the struggle between Jacob and Esau, they’re pushing and pulling, trying to get out. Moses is in this rough and barren place, he’s outgrown it, and even if he has to fight to get out, he knows he can’t stay in that place. And so, like a baby he’s being pushed out, he’s separated from the world that he knew, removed from the environment that he’d been so content in, forced to embrace the unknown world before him.

This confrontation with God and his wife must’ve been fearful, alarming, and so disappointing to Moses. But anybody can follow God when everything’s going the way you want, but will you follow him when he’s about to kill you? I wonder if you can say like Job?

*“Though he slay me, yet will I trust him” (Job 13:15, NKJV).*

You know, when you don’t understand what’s happening to you and when things aren’t going the way you expected them to go. Because the real test of faith is obeying when God doesn’t do what you asked him to do or expected him to do. To obey even though your heart is broken, even though you’re disappointed, even though things didn’t go the way you thought they should.

But even now, God is still drawing Moses deeper, there’s greater authority, and God is still fathering Moses. God is with him, but it’s not always easy, sometimes it’s like that fourth man walking in the furnace or Jacob wrestling with the angel. And God is so patient with Moses because he knows what’s in him, God can see him parting the Red Sea, he can see him on the mountain that is trembling with the glory of God.

And so, like a newborn child entering into the world, Moses becomes a new identity, but he’s not alone, he’s not going to have to follow God into the unknown by himself. The Lord said to Aaron in verse 27,

*“The Lord said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. Then Moses told Aaron everything the Lord had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform” (Exodus 4:27-28).*

Here we find Moses demonstrating his faith in God, he’s telling Aaron about what God had said and the miraculous signs. No longer do we find him doubting God or doubting himself, but he’s willing to follow God into the unknown, willing to step out in faith, recognizing that God doesn’t reveal everything all at once, but that he’s with him and he’s faithful. This is so important for Moses as he embarks on this journey, stepping into the uncertainty of an unknown future, relying upon progressive revelation, just glimpses of glory along the way, little excerpts of the story.

And then in verse 29, the Bible says that Moses and Aaron arrived in Egypt and they

*“…brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped” (Exodus 4:29-31).*

God had promised to be with Moses and Aaron and now we see them in a spiritual way, they’re operating not in the realm of understanding, but in the realm of faith. The Spirit of God is moving through them and what we’re seeing is this transition of authority, and yet in this transition there’s still going to be some stumbling, there’s going to be some confusion, some uncertainty, and we’re going to find them trying to figure out things as they move along, but they’re going to follow God into the unknown, not perfectly, but by faith.

Today you and I have the same opportunity to follow God into the unknown; sometimes it will be challenging, we will be looking for footprints in the sand, retracing our steps, trying to understand his ways and follow his path. Sometimes we have to be careful not to get ahead of God and we’ll feel like we’re groping blindly because the Bible describes it this way,

*“We see but a poor reflection as in a mirror” (1 Corinthians 13:12).*

And yet, it’s our faith that keeps us moving forward. It’s faith that kept Moses pressing forward, he didn’t see the complete picture yet, but he kept stepping forward knowing it was just a matter of time before he’d see the whole picture.

Moses trusted God, he kept following his commands, doing what God told him to do, and the Bible says,

*“Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert” (Exodus 5:1).*

Moses had come a long way and it seems like just yesterday he was running from the snake which turned into a staff in his hand; but I imagine he must’ve been wrestling with his doubts now as he came face-to-face with Pharaoh. You know, here he was a simple shepherd standing before the king of Egypt, his insecurities must have been screaming so much louder than his faith, but disregarding the doubts and fears that were certainly scrolling through his mind, he stepped forward in obedience and said, “Let my people go.”

The Pharaoh replied in verse two,

*“Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go” (Exodus 5:2).*

In a split second, all of the doubt, the fear, and insecurity that Moses had been replaying over and over in his mind. You know, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?” “What if the Israelites don’t believe me or listen to me?” “I don’t speak well, I’ve never been eloquent, and I’m slow of speech and tongue.” All of a sudden, the words that had been replaying in Moses mind, all of these doubts and fears were now echoing through the halls of the Pharaoh’s court.

I’m sure that Moses had to resist the temptation to run at that moment, but he didn’t disengage, he didn’t abandon his calling, and he refused to retreat. Together Moses and Aaron stood their ground, they held fast, because they knew that they had a higher purpose and they had a higher power.

I hope and pray that you can grab hold of this, that you can own this, understanding that your greatest victories and your greatest fears often go hand-in-hand. In other words, when you come face-to-face with your Pharaoh, even though you may feel fear, you can be strong and courageous, you can stand firm and resist, because you have the Spirit of the living God with you. And so, you may not see it yet, but you have already won the victory, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the Spirit who lives in the world. The Bible says it this way,

*“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4, NKJV).*

And so, you can stand firm because the Holy Spirit will strengthen you as you stand your ground in faith.

When the enemy tells you, “You can’t or you won’t or you never will,” you turn your head and listen to the Holy Spirit, you listen to the Word of God, the voice of God who tells you,

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, NKJV).*

You are an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of your testimony. And so, when fear and temptation rises up inside of you, you just continue to stand your ground, because Christ’s power is made perfect in weakness. And even if you have a setback, maybe a Pharaoh saying “no,” you stand firm and let nothing move you. You put on the full armor of God and you don’t back down.

What I love about this here in Exodus chapter 5, is that God was still fathering Moses, and he gave Moses an Aaron to encourage him and come alongside of him. You know, it’s like Saul had Barnabas, or Ruth had her Naomi, and Timothy had his Paul; each one helped supporting the other and encouraging them to go to the next level. It was a great encouragement to Moses to have his brother at his side. Together they followed God into the unknown, the did what God told them to do, they didn’t run, they didn’t hide, and they didn’t give up.

Today, as we close, I want to encourage you to step out of your fear, out of your doubts, and like Moses confront your enemies. For some of you maybe it’s reaching out to someone who’s down and discouraged, coming alongside of them and praying for them, encouraging them to stand firm. Others of you may be missing the opportunity to do what you were created to do; you’re missing the thrill of allowing God to use you to make a difference in the world. But you were created for God’s glory as you serve his purpose.

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